

Prevent, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus: Analysing terrorism prevention policies using Althusser's framework

Abstract

The work of Louis Althusser is well regarded in the study of ideology, having been used to analyse the material basis for ideology, and challenging the idea that ideology is simply a product of the mind. Recent advances in counterterrorism have seen many states adopting preventative programmes which are non-violent, and nominally voluntary, attempting to deradicalize or steer subjects away from radical ideologies, in an attempt to stem terrorist recruits. Many of these programmes claim not to be ideological. Prevent, which is the UK's preventative counterterrorism programme, claims not to be ideological, but rather only concerned with stopping extremist ideologies. Using Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) framework, this article explores the ideological and material basis of Prevent, arguing that while Prevent assures us of its non-ideological nature, at its core is a programme that is part of the reproductive ideological apparatus of the state.

Keywords: Prevent, Counterterrorism, Ideology, United Kingdom, Althusser

Introduction

Counterterrorism laws and policies in the UK have become mainstreamed and consistently frame ideology as inherently violent and causal in terrorist action.¹ However, the debate about the role of ideology has been one-sided. The ideologies of extremists and terrorists are well explored and are commonly linked to a negative political and cultural milieu.² This is reproduced at the elite and policy level. Yet there is little acknowledgement that counterterrorism policies themselves are driven by the ideologies of the incumbent elites. As Fallers points out, ideology forms part of every culture and is actively concerned with the establishment and defence of patterns of beliefs and values. The state plays a key role in their reproduction.³

This article looks at Prevent, which is part of the UK's counterterrorism strategy CONTEST. Contrary to "war" strategies of counterterrorism that use violence to suppress terrorist activity, Prevent is a voluntary programme. It is concerned with preventing people from getting involved in or supporting terrorism and is most concerned with extreme ideologies and people's vulnerability to them. Community support projects, public communications, individual interventions, and a public duty to be aware of, and report any concerns about so-called vulnerability to support terrorism are all crucial aspects of prevention. Despite being a softer policy, Prevent has attracted criticism, with several scholars accusing Prevent of being racist, Islamophobic, "thought policing", and counter to democratic ideals. Those who work

¹ Jessie Blackbourn, Fiona De Londras, and Lydia Morgan, *Accountability and Review in the Counter-Terrorist State* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020).

² Richard Jackson, 'The Political Necessity of Terrorism', in *BISA Annual Conference 2007* (British International Studies Association, Cambridge, 2007), <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departamental/interpol/csr/political-necessity-of-terrorism-richard-4.pdf>.

³ Lloyd Fallers, 'Ideology and Culture in Uganda Nationalism', *American Anthropologist* 63, no. 4 (1961): 678–79, <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1961.63.4.02a00010>.

on the policy contest the accuracy of these claims.⁴ They counter that violence is something which has long been considered unacceptable in political activism, and that Prevent is simply about “safeguarding”. They argue that this prevents vulnerable individuals from engaging in activities that are harmful to themselves and others. According to this argument, Prevent is akin to child protection or drug safeguarding policies. In this sense, Prevent claims not to be ideological or political, and certainly not concerned with “thought policing”. Indeed many activities undertaken by Prevent officers are explicitly non-political and focus on a myriad of seemingly innocuous activities, such as developing sport, art and entrepreneurship in communities. Where Prevent works to steer persons away from ideologies deemed extremist, it claims to not be steering people towards anything in particular.

This article contends that despite claims to the contrary, Prevent is ideological. However, Prevent works hard to appear non-ideological, making the study of ideology in Prevent difficult. This study explores the relationship between ideology and Prevent using Althusser’s theory of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Althusser’s theory examines how non-violent state institutions create subjects and thus shape how we see the world. It also looks at the material practices that constitute those ideologies. This theory is particularly useful in analysing the activities of Prevent, as it allows us to see how material practices can result in ideological interpellation and highlights how seemingly non-ideological activities, such as safeguarding, can actually be part of the ideological practice of the state. We argue that through Althusser, Prevent can be seen in all its facets as an ideological policy. This allows us to robustly challenge the idea that Prevent is just about safeguarding, and that Prevent’s insistence that ideology is a problem of extremists is facile.

The article also engages with some of the developments of Althusser’s theory, especially about whether an interpellated turn is coerced or not. We find that interpellation can be coerced, but that this is not the only way that interpellation happens. Interpellation also makes an offer to the subject-to-be, incentivising a turn. The article begins with an exploration of the role of ideology in counterterrorism and Prevent, before outlining Althusser’s theory of the ISA. Following this, we look at key aspects of the ISA theory and relate these to key parts of the Prevent policy. We explore how British values and Prevent training creates miscognition; how the Prevent duty and Channel interventions inscribe ideology in material processes; and how public communications and referrals Prevent interpellate subjects.

Whither ideology in counterterrorism?

Most commonly, ideology is thought of as a collection of ideas about the world and how it should be organized. Coherence is an important aspect of ideology as it refers to, at the very least, a set of ideas that are bound together. ‘One might add, as corollaries, *contrast* and *stability* – the one implying coherence vis-à-vis competing ideologies and the other implying coherence through time’.⁵ Broadly ideology can be defined as the way a system, individuals, groups and even a whole society, make sense of the world around them, rationalising their behaviour. Ideologies do not have to be rational or practical - indeed they can be delusional. But they still share the characteristics of coherence and temporal stability.⁶

⁴ Sara Khan and Tony McMahon, *The Battle for British Islam: Reclaiming Muslim Identity from Extremism* (London: Saqi, 2016).

⁵ John Gerring, ‘Ideology: A Definitional Analysis’, *Political Research Quarterly* 50, no. December (1997): 957–94.

⁶ Kathleen Knight, ‘Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century’, *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 4 (2006): 619–26.

This analysis, alongside the works of Freedman,⁷ Sartori,⁸ and Mullins,⁹ provide a descriptive account of ideology in the political world. This descriptive tradition looks at what ideology says and is, but less at what it does. This contrasts with the critical tradition,¹⁰ which understands ideology as a series of discourses that support power, although not necessarily related to truth or falsehood. In this model, ideology is productive, in that it produces subjects, relations, and modes of being.¹¹ While both models are useful in understanding the social world, this article uses the latter mode of analysis. As noted, Prevent works hard to mask ideology in its actions, appearing as often as it can as entirely neutral to any descriptive of ideology.

Prevent is one of the four Ps (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) of the UK counterterrorism strategy CONTEST.¹² Prevent is concerned with persons who have not yet crossed the criminal threshold and looks to prevent them from doing so. There have been several revisions to the Prevent strategy. Broadly, the overall objectives of the Prevent policy have remained the same and are to:

- respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism (on and offline);
- prevent people being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given the proper advice and support;
- re-enforce safeguarding at the heart of Prevent; and
- work with a wide range of sectors and institutions ... where there are risks of radicalization.¹³

Prevent seeks to achieve these objectives through a range of interventions, including the promotion of British values, including democracy, rule of law, liberty and tolerance; an array of local programmes seeking to transform the culture and politics of targeted communities to increase “resilience” to extremist ideas; and working with individuals reported to be showing signs of radicalization under the Channel programme.¹⁴ The government also introduced a statutory duty upon public institutions to report individuals to the Prevent who are suspected of showing signs of radicalisation.¹⁵ The 2018 Prevent strategy also works with terrorism offenders, trying to deradicalize or disengage them from terrorist activity. The focus on ideology and intervention is described by practitioners as “safeguarding”, softening the edge of the interventions. These interventions are nominally voluntary, although those who refuse

⁷ Michael Freedman, ‘Ideology and Political Theory’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 3–22.

⁸ Giovanni Sartori, ‘Politics, Ideology, and Belief Systems’, *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 2 (1969): 398–411.

⁹ Willard Mullins, ‘On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science’, *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 2 (1972): 498–510.

¹⁰ Mark Bevir, ‘Ideology as Distorted Belief’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no. 2 (1996): 107–22.

¹¹ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007).

¹² HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CM 9608)* (London: Stationery Office, 2018).

¹³ *Ibid.*; HM Government, *Prevent Strategy (CM 8092)* (London: Stationary Office, 2011); HM Government, ‘The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism’ (London: HMSO, 2009).

¹⁴ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy (CM 8092)*.

¹⁵ Home Office, ‘Statutory Guidance - Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: For England and Wales’, Gov.uk, 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>; Caitlin Mastroe, ‘Evaluating CVE: Understanding the Recent Changes to the United Kingdom’s Implementation of Prevent’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 2 (2016): 50–60.

to engage might be referred to other services, including the police.¹⁶ Many Prevent practitioners state that they are looking for a soft approach that does not scare, does not intimidate, and encourages people to report their suspicions without fear of criminalising someone.¹⁷

While responding to ideology is in the objectives of Prevent, making it key to the policy, it also holds a strange place in this framework. It is named as a key driver of the terrorist threat by Prevent.¹⁸ Police forces have produced documents that profile what they consider to be extreme ideologies at length.¹⁹ Statistical bulletins also track the ideological character of individuals referred to Prevent.²⁰ Training modules are made available which give safeguarding professionals further insight into ideology.²¹ Mentors with a similar ideological background are assigned to individuals referred to Prevent so that they can better relate to one another, or explain why the thoughts of the referrals are an ideological distortion.²²

The process of becoming involved in terrorism, known as radicalization, is also inextricably linked to ideology in Prevent. While radicalization is thought to be an important driver for getting involved in terrorism in the wider literature and is associated with several different contested factors,²³ in Prevent it is framed more simply as the process of adopting an extremist ideology. For instance, it is described in the 2011 Prevent strategy as ‘the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.’²⁴ The Counter-Extremism strategy similarly defines the process where ‘a vulnerable person will be introduced to an extremist ideology by a radicalising influencer ... [who] draws the vulnerable individual ever closer to extremism.’²⁵ Thus, in Prevent radicalization is not sufficient in causing terrorism. However, ideology is. This idea is cemented in public discourse.²⁶

While the apparatus of British counterterrorism is obsessed with ideology, it is also in denial of it. Ideology holds a key place in the theoretical framework of radicalization that is at the core of Prevent, but is missing from the counterthrust. The alternatives to extreme ideologies are not the ideologies of the British state, liberal-democratic-capitalism. Instead of the ideology

¹⁶ Valentina Bartolucci and Joshua Skoczylis, ‘The Practice of Counterterrorism in the United Kingdom and Its Sociopolitical Effects’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Studies*, ed. Scott Romaniuk et al. (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 337–54.

¹⁷ Joshua Skoczylis, ‘The Local Prevention of Terrorism in Strategy and Practice: “Contest” a New Era in the Fight against Terrorism’ (PhD thesis, Leeds, University of Leeds, 2013).

¹⁸ HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CM 9608)*.

¹⁹ Counter Terrorism Policing South East, ‘Safeguarding Young People and Adults from Ideological Extremism’, OSCB, 2019, <https://www.oscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Safeguarding-from-Radicalisation-Reference-Guide.pdf>.

²⁰ Home Office, ‘Individuals Referred to and Supported through the Prevent Programme’ (London: Home Office, 2019), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853646/in-dividuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2018-mar2019-hosb3219.pdf.

²¹ Home Office, ‘Prevent: Training Catalogue’ (London, 2016), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/503973/Prevent_Training_catalogue_-_March_2016.pdf.

²² Tom Pettinger, ‘British Terrorism Preemption: Subjectivity and Disjuncture in Channel “De-radicalization” Interventions’, *British Journal of Sociology Online First* (2020).

²³ A Schmid, *Radicalization, De-Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013).

²⁴ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy (CM 8092)*.

²⁵ HM Government, *Counter-Extremism Strategy (CM 9148)* (London: Stationary Office, 2015).

²⁶ Basil Germond, Tony McEnery, and Anna Marchi, ‘The EU’s Comprehensive Approach as the Dominant Discourse: A Corpus-Linguistics Analysis of the EU’s Counter-Piracy Narrative’, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 21, no. 1 (2016): 150.

of the British state, we have British values, which include democracy, tolerance, and rule of law.²⁷ These values are framed as natural. To deviate from these is to be an extremist, and to become associated with an extremist ideology. But one is found with an ideology only at this point. Even those who Prevent tries to deradicalize or disengage from extreme ideologies are not expected to adopt a new ideology. They are simply expected to reduce their vulnerability to extreme ideologies by engaging in normal, productive lives within the confines of British society.²⁸ Thus, one would get the impression Prevent is not ideological. However, this is a mirage.

Depoliticising counterterrorism

That Prevent understands ideology as a key driving force in political violence but does not consider its work to be ideological, presents a puzzle. While it presents itself as non-ideological, Prevent is working on behalf of what Jameson calls the *dominant* ideology,²⁹ competing against *emergent* and *residual* ideological formations. Those competing formations damage the state order as they become influential, putting production and reproduction at risk. Thus, while promoting the dominant ideology, the state also must suppress these competing formations. How it does so is not always explicit and suppressing emergent and residual formations do not always mean actively promoting dominant ideological thought. Cynical or passive subjectivities equally serve the state in that they allow for the continuation of the status quo with little resistance.³⁰

Prevent is part of a wider movement shifting from the war model of counterterrorism to a preventative criminal justice model. This has entailed a movement from repression to engagement, attempting to get people on side with policing efforts.³¹ The war model, mostly used abroad but also in Northern Ireland, advocates the use of maximum force, and often involves the military, intelligence agents embedded in paramilitary groups, extrajudicial murder and imprisonment, and coercing civilians to supply intelligence.³² However, this approach was not deemed appropriate or politically viable domestically. However, aspects of colonial policing which included the “hearts and minds” approach developed in Malaya and the use of community intelligence in Northern Ireland transferred well from the colony to the metropole.³³ Thus, the move to preventative models means that the more coercive aspects of counterterrorism policing are separated from ideological work. This makes it seem less like ideas are being policed, and therefore more like it is free, democratic competition in the *polis*. However, despite this masking, we must recognise that counterterrorism is as much an exercise

²⁷ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy (CM 8092)*, 107.

²⁸ Amy Thornton and Noémie Bouhana, ‘Preventing Radicalization in the UK: Expanding the Knowledge-Base on the Channel Programme’, *Policing* 13, no. 3 (2019): 331–44.

²⁹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 6.

³⁰ Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1988).

³¹ Ronald Crelinsten, ‘The Discourse and Practice of Counter-Terrorism in Liberal Democracies’, *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 44, no. 3 (1998): 389–413, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8497.00028>; Joshua Skoczylis, *The Local Prevention of Terrorism: Strategy and Practice in the Fight against Terrorism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³² Noah Feldman, ‘Choices of Law, Choices of War’, *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 25, no. 2 (2002): 457–70; Rory Finegan, ‘Shadowboxing in the Dark: Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism in Northern Ireland’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 3 (2016): 497–519.

³³ Abdul Razak, Javaid Rehman, and Joshua Skoczylis, “‘Prevent’ Policies and Laws: A Comparative Survey of the UK, Malaysia, and Pakistan”, in *Routledge Handbook of Law and Terrorism*, ed. Genevieve Lennon and Clive Walker (London: Routledge, 2015), 380–96; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin Books, 2017).

in legitimacy and consent as it is in deterrence and security practice.³⁴ It is about taming terrorism and extremism by creating an overarching narrative that legitimises state attempts to choreograph dissent against the status quo and the notion of national exceptionalism, identity, and nationhood.³⁵

While Prevent is focused on ideology, it is only focused on terrorist or extremist ideology. Its own ideology is obscured. This obfuscation hides an apparatus of ideology – winning hearts and minds is about winning legitimacy and support for the state and the way it functions. By hiding its own ideology, Prevent is removing the possibility of contestation. The shifting of ideology away from the political contest and towards a social understanding of it being a simple catalyst for violence supports ideological reproduction.³⁶ This creates

the notion of a subject morally and criminally fully *responsible* for his acts [which] clearly serves the ideological need to conceal the intricate, always-already operative texture of historico-discursive presuppositions that not only provide the context for the subject's act but also define in advance the co-ordinates of its meaning: the system can function only if the cause of its malfunction can be located in the responsible subject's *guilt*.³⁷

Hiding ideology allows the state to argue that counterterrorism is about keeping the public safe. That is, it is for your good that you must keep a watchful eye on your neighbours, your family, and your friends. Otherwise, innocents will be harmed in acts of violence, and in modern society, we agree that violence is bad. However, while ideology remains hidden, it is there. As Žižek argues, non-ideology is impossible because we always need a psychic, political framework for understanding a fundamentally unknowable world.³⁸ 'Ideologies are the thought-products par excellence of the political sphere: they are necessary, normal and they facilitate (and reflect) political action.'³⁹

The Ideological State Apparatus

Although Prevent largely ignores ideology, except as a catalyst for violence, Althusser argues that all non-violent state apparatus' must be saturated with ideology. This is because states that do not try to reproduce themselves ideologically will not last long. They do not just need to reproduce the skills necessary to maintain production; they also need to reproduce the relationships and ideas that sustain the established order. Ideology needs to be reproduced. This is done through two mechanisms, known as the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The former consists of those instruments of violence that can coerce compliance upon an unwilling subject, including the police and the army. These might maintain the relationships of production but do not create subjects that accede to relationships of power. Violence might pacify populations, but does little to create recognition, creating insecure systems. This is akin to the "war" model of counterterrorism that has been

³⁴ Peter Neumann, *Old and New Terrorism: Late Modernity, Globalization and the Transformation of Political Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

³⁵ Joshua Skoczyliś and Sam Andrews, 'Can Prevent Be Saved? No, But ...', *Critical Social Policy* 40, no. 3 (2020): 350–69.

³⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. (London: Verso, 2008).

³⁷ Slavoj Žižek, 'Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology.', in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso Books, 2012), 5.

³⁸ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

³⁹ Freedon, 'Ideology and Political Theory'.

deemed inappropriate for domestic counterterrorism. Secure political systems are instead created when subjects recognise themselves within the political order and reproduce it. ISAs have an important function in that they seek to create a subject that complies by their own volition. It is formed of schools, churches, trade unions, the family, and other non-violent social institutions.

Althusser argues that these ISAs function through interpellation and miscognition. Interpellation is famously described as the process where an individual becomes a subject when they recognise themselves in the call of a police officer. When the officer shouts, “Hey! You!”, the individual recognises that they are the subject of the call, and a subject that complies with the ideology implicit in the call. They then come to exist within the law as that subject.⁴⁰⁴¹ Thus interpellation is a process of encountering and internalising cultural values. This internalisation is, however, not yours alone but requires a *response* and demands an openness to being interpellated by another’s address,⁴² ‘and it is predicated on the acknowledgement of the contestability of claims represented.’⁴³ However, as the subject is *always-already* a subject, and because the ideology that they are interpellated into is one of the discrete relationships where “everything really is so”, even though it never can be, the subject suffers miscognition.⁴⁴ They recognise truth where there cannot be any, with ideology providing something that ‘makes sense of what does not make sense.’⁴⁵ In doing so it conceals the very real contradictions that we live within our everyday lives⁴⁶ and cloaks the *Real* with a cohesive reality.⁴⁷

Importantly, Althusser notes that these functions are *material*, and not solely confined to the Real or the Imaginary. Practices and apparatus work to produce and reproduce ideology. Thus things like traditions, school lessons, marriage vows, jobs and rituals reproduce ideology, whether we want them to or not. He invokes Pascal here, noting that a Christian is made not through belief, but through the action of prayer. ‘Kneel down, move your lips, *and you will believe*.’⁴⁸ This results in subjects who ‘do not know it, but ... are doing it [or at the very least] they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.’⁴⁹ In some sense, these material acts are performative, in that they are a ‘set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that set over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.’⁵⁰ Thus, subjects are not always created through belief; or at least, belief is not necessarily the intended result of all ISAs. While for some belief might be more important, in the main Althusser seems to argue that in fact, the primary function of the ISA is in trapping the individual in a web of relations within which they have no choice but to act as if they believe. Through this acting, they then come to believe and are fully interpellated as subjects. Writing on race, Wekker states that it ‘is not only a matter of ideology, beliefs and statements

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

⁴¹ Ibid. Here, Butler refers to law not necessarily as judicial law, but rather as structures of power that discipline and shape us as subjects.

⁴² Athena Athanasiou, *Agonistic Mourning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 244.

⁴³ Mónica Brito Vieira, ‘Representing Silence in Politics’, *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 4 (2020): 983.

⁴⁴ Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London ; New York: Verso, 2014).

⁴⁵ Tony Myers, *Slavoj Žižek Routledge Critical Thinkers*. (London, New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (London: Penguin Classics, 1976).

⁴⁷ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

⁴⁸ Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*.

⁴⁹ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[but] also becomes transparent in practices, in the way things are organized and done.’⁵¹ Thus, race is made real not just through racial ideologies, but through the enactment of those ideologies in state practice. Through this material process ‘subjects are implicated in relations of power but ... are also enabled by them’⁵². These functions also reinforce each other. When one replies to the policeman’s call,⁵³ you are following the ritual which ‘is an expression/effect of your inner belief; in short, the *external* ritual performatively generates its own ideological foundation.’⁵⁴ Thus, through answering the call, one recognises the authority of the police officer’s place as a subject in an overarching ideology.

Althusser’s theory, while influential, has not been without criticism. Initially, it seems that the interpellating call is irresistible, as even a rejection of the call functions as a form of recognition, as it recognises the call as part of a cohesive ideological system. An ignorant turn – that is, a turn without knowledge of the caller – also brings the subject into an order, whether they know it or not. This has faced criticism for its universality, resulting in situations where even militant trade unions are seen as part of an ideological apparatus of the state. The “turn” itself is also something that has generated debate. Eagleton and Dolar note that for the target to receive the hail, they already have to be a subject⁵⁵. Others have debated how the hail works, and why a person would answer.⁵⁶ Butler considers this a question of coercion and argues that Althusser made the interpellating agent a police officer to signify the threat of force implicit in interpellation.⁵⁷ Žižek, while adopting Althusser’s framework and many of his ideas, finds a weak point in that Althusser never succeeded in ‘thinking out the link between Ideological State Apparatuses and ideological interpellation.’⁵⁸ Thus Althusser does not explain how subjects come to interiorise the effects of interpellation.⁵⁹ As such, there is some disagreement about how we should fill in the gaps within Althusser’s theory.

These criticisms are important to address, as the resolution to these questions has implications for theory. While there is some coercion implicit within the call, this is not the only cause for the interpellated turn. The call is primarily an offer. The offer is to *be* within the system; to be recognised, and to be allowed to reform and become accepted if one was not before. As noted, Prevent – and most ISAs – are nominally voluntary, and so coercion cannot be the primary reason for an interpellated turn. Therefore we follow more closely the arguments of Althusser, rather than Butler, in that the subject turns because it wants to be a subject, not (just) because it is forced. This goes hand in hand with what Žižek, following Lacan, calls the Real, which is the totalization of reality that can never be properly understood or symbolized, and thus compels us towards metaphysical or ideological explanations for our lives and existence.⁶⁰ Resch notes this theory, and Lacan’s psychoanalytic framework in general, corresponds with

⁵¹ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 50.

⁵² Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁵³ Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*.

⁵⁴ Žižek, ‘Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology.’

⁵⁵ Mladen Dolar, ‘Beyond Interpellation’, *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1993): 75–96; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007).

⁵⁶ Matthew Lampert, ‘Resisting Ideology: On Butler’s Critique of Althusser’, *Diacritics* 43, no. 2 (2015); James Martel, ‘When the Call Is Not Meant for You: Misinterpellation, Subjectivity, and the Law’, *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 48, no. 4 (2015): 494–515.

⁵⁷ Judith Butler, ‘Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All.’, *Yale French Studies* 88 (1995): 6–26.

⁵⁸ Agon Hamza, ‘The Sublime Absolute: Althusser, Žižek, and the Critique of Ideology’, in *Žižek and Media Studies*, ed. Matthew Flisfeder and Louis-Paul Willis (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 33.

⁵⁹ Henry Krips, ‘Ideology and Its Pleasures: Althusser, Žižek & Pfaller’, *Continental Thought and Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 2, no. 1 (2018): 333–67.

⁶⁰ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

Althusser's theory of the ISA and thus provides a further interesting explanation for why a subject might turn – we simply want answers.⁶¹

As for whether a subject needs to exist to hear the call, it makes sense that to recognise one's self in the call, the call itself needs to be understood. It is inconceivable that an interpellation could occur in the context of a call to or from something completely alien. To be interpellated, one needs to understand where one belongs within the symbolic framework that the interpellation exists within. Despite a previous disagreement with Butler, the concept of the *always-already* subject is nicely complemented by Butler's work on gender.^{62,63} Butler explores how gender functions as a disciplinary framework, placing the individual within the context of social expectation of gender. This subject is also treated as *always-already*. For instance, Butler explores how at birth, the medical team will announce "it's a boy!" or, "it's a girl!", and therefore inaugurate the individual as a subject. However, the baby has no concept of subjectification here. The baby has no real understanding of language at birth. However, while the gender is inscribed upon the baby, it is the parents or legal guardians of the child that inherit this inscription until the point where the child can understand what the assignment of gender means. In this sense, the always-already subject is more a subject who inherits subjectivity later in life. Some social agent is simply holding it for them until they reach the point where they can accept it, or otherwise have it forced upon them. Once understood they formally enter into the symbolic arena. As Martel explains, interpellation reaches both backwards and forwards in time. A successful interpellation does not tell us we are a subject now, but rather always-already was a subject, but perhaps did not know it yet.⁶⁴ Actions we have taken previously are reinterpreted as the actions of an unknown subject-to-be. This has implications for those referred to Prevent. An accepted Channel intervention is a recasting of one's life to that point as always-already being extreme, even if it was not understood as such before.

Ideology in practice: Prevent

Prevent is, arguably, the ISA form of counterterrorism in the UK, specifically involving ideological interventions to form subjects and to re-form those who turn away from the interpellation of the state. As outlined above, we would expect to see interpellation, miscognition, and the materiality of the ideology embedded within this policy. This section explores how Prevent fits into this framework, and whether the study of the Prevent policy can be used to develop the ISA framework.

Miscognition: British Values and Prevent Training

As mentioned above, Prevent defines extremism in relation to British values.⁶⁵ These include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.⁶⁶ The teaching of these values has become mandatory in schools, and the Prevent duty also places an obligation on public institutions to pay "due regard" to Prevent,

⁶¹ Paul Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁶² Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*.

⁶³ Ibid.; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁶⁴ Martel, 'When the Call Is Not Meant for You: Misinterpellation, Subjectivity, and the Law'.

⁶⁵ HM Government, 'Counter-Extremism Strategy' (London: HMSO, 2015), 9.

⁶⁶ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy (CM 8092)*, 107.

embedding counterterrorism within health, education, social care, prisons, and local authorities.⁶⁷ Defining extremism in relation to these values, however, does not create a cohesive definition, as much of what is held to be British values are in fact contestable and contested concepts. Thus, the lines between extremism and “acceptable” politics are fluid, and the fact that it is unclear where the dividing line between extremism and moderation lies creates a constant threat of being labelled a deviant.

This makes teaching British values in schools problematic. However, defining extremism is not the primary purpose of this work. While there is some discussion of extremism, much of the work here focuses instead on promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and debate. The legal duty to teach these values has resulted in embedding British values into the national curriculum and ensuring that it is taught across all levels, including at nurseries and primary schools.⁶⁸ Some have argued that the promotion of these very values is

an attempt to depoliticize discussion of the values and standards that underpin public life in the UK and the extent to which they are upheld. [Fundamental British Values] encourage an unquestioning view of the nation as the most salient community.⁶⁹

Indeed, this taps into the myth of British nationhood, which is a narrative of half-truths about the origins, identity, and purpose of this nation. These constitute an integral part of the ideological foundation of nations and nationalism.⁷⁰ Richardson argues that the embedding of these values into education is an attempt on behalf of the government to ‘give a convincing and inspiring lead on issues of national identity and narrative, and to signal that it understands the population’s anxieties and can be trusted to deal with them.’⁷¹ British values do this by creating a favourable narrative of British history, positioned against the *other* that threatens it.⁷² This fixation on Britishness generates suspicion towards the *other* and those who challenge it,⁷³ and celebrate nationalism and visions of a white ethno-Christian identity.⁷⁴

More broadly, public sector workers are mandated to pay due regard to Prevent. Usually, this means having an institutional Prevent lead and taking some form of training. One common form of training is the Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training offered by the Home Office. WRAP is used to train people in a public-facing role to spot vulnerabilities

⁶⁷ Clive Walker and Jessie Blackburn, ‘Interdiction and Indoctrination: The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015’, *Modern Law Review* 79, no. 5 (2016): 840–70.

⁶⁸ Department of Education, ‘Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools: Departmental Advice for Maintained Schools’ (London, 2014), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf; The Key, ‘Promoting British Values in Schools’, The Key for School Governors, 2020, <https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/school-improvement-and-strategy/strategic-planning/values-ethos/promoting-british-values-in-schools/>.

⁶⁹ Hugh Starkey, ‘Fundamental British Values and Citizenship Education: Tensions between National and Global Perspectives’, *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 100, no. 2 (2018): 149–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2018.1434420>.

⁷⁰ Yinan He, ‘National Mythmaking and the Problems of History In Sino-Japanese Relations’ (Conference on Memory of War, Boston: MIT.edu, 2003), http://web.mit.edu/rpeters/papers/yinan_sino-japanese.pdf.

⁷¹ Robin Richardson, ‘British Values and British Identity: Muddles, Mixtures, and Ways Ahead’, *London Review of Education* 13, no. 2 (2015): 39, <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.13.2.04>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Joshua Skoczyliis, ‘Counterterrorism and Society: The Contradiction of the Surveillance State - Understanding the Relationship among Communities, State Authorities, and Society’, in *Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism*, ed. Romaniuk, Scott et al. (London: Palgrave, 2017), 117–34.

⁷⁴ Nadine Elsayed, ‘Make Great Britain Great Again: Populism And Nationalism In Brexit’, *Perspectives on Business and Economics* 36 (2018): 94–101.

that might make someone susceptible to terrorist “grooming” and to report individuals assessed as vulnerable to Prevent. The training is now ‘a core part of the professional lives of, for instance, teachers, social workers and healthcare practitioners,’⁷⁵ meeting part of the Prevent statutory duty. Over 1.1 million people have completed the Home Office training by 2018. Perhaps surprisingly, this training has little to do with ideology. Training is less about understanding extremism and terrorism, and more about spotting and referring vulnerable individuals to Prevent, where an assessment will be made. As Thomas notes, ‘we don’t need to understand the ideologies or ideas that are promoted, more the way they work to hook in the vulnerable.’⁷⁶ Indeed, much of the Prevent training encourages the idea that people who get involved in terrorism or extremism, or who come to support it, are not choosing of their own volition. They are instead being groomed, a process which is explicitly compared with the process of manipulating minors into having sex with adults.⁷⁷ This assumption ends up removing agency from the individual, assuming that ‘[t]hose who are radicalised often lack the intellectual challenge to effectively question the falsehoods in terrorist propaganda.’⁷⁸

The training then becomes more of a technical exercise in apophysis, where spotting vulnerability simply traces ‘the contours of what you will not mention.’⁷⁹ This is not, of course, to say that understanding ideology plays no part in Prevent. CONTEST directly names far-right and Islamist terrorism as the greatest threat to the United Kingdom and Prevent e-training repeatedly talks about signs, symbols, tropes of various ideologies.⁸⁰ However, while the strategy understands ideology as a prime driver of terrorism it goes on to state that ‘[t]here is no precise line between what we have described above as terrorist ideology, and what we consider extremist ideology.’⁸¹ Thus understanding about ideology is presented as *supplementary* to the knowledge of vulnerability – the function of it is as a marker of something being wrong, a symptom, rather than a thing worthy of real critique or understanding.⁸² Concerning British values, we are encouraged to look at someone with a divergent ideology and know simply that we are right and that there is something wrong that needs to be fixed. The exact diagnosis of the function of ideology and the nature of the sickness is left to Prevent professionals, displacing the job of ideological critique from civil society to the government.

Both British values and the Prevent training can be seen as exercises in miscognition. Althusser notes that as interpellation situates us as subjects, we then fail to recognise the real conditions of the society in which we live. Through this miscognition

⁷⁵ Thomas Martin, ‘Identifying Potential Terrorists: Visuality, Security and the Channel Project’, *Security Dialogue*, 24 May 2018, 096701061877007, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010618770070>.

⁷⁶ Home Office, *Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent: Full Workshop Script* (London: Home Office, 2014).

⁷⁷ Tower Hamlets Borough Council, ‘Understanding Tower Hamlets’ Prevent Guidance for Schools’ (London: Tower Hamlet Borough Council, 2015); Richard Adams, ‘Nicky Morgan: Islamist Extremists Using Same Grooming Tactics as Paedophiles’, *The Guardian*, 2016, sec. Schools, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/19/nicky-morgan-islamist-extremists-grooming-tactics-paedophiles>.

⁷⁸ Department of Education, ‘Advice Note: Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals in Higher Education from Terrorist Groups’ (London, 2017), 15, https://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/uploads/files/2017/05/advice_note_safeguarding_in_he_050517.pdf.

⁷⁹ Myers, *Slavoj Žižek: Routledge Critical Thinkers.*, 3.

⁸⁰ HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CM 9608)*; Home Office, ‘Introduction to Prevent E-Learning Package.’, Gov.uk, Prevent E-Learning, n.d., <https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/m/screen2>.

⁸¹ HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CM 9608)*, 23.

⁸² Jacques Lacan and Bruce Fink, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006).

it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all, it is their relation to these conditions of existence that is represented to them there. ... What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of real relations that govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.⁸³

Through Prevent, miscognition is achieved. Via British values, Prevent creates a narrative of British exceptionalism, a nation that holds only “good” values such as tolerance, respect for democracy and the rule of law. Britain’s long and bloody history is obscured and hidden from plain sight. Little is said about slavery, colonialism, racism, and the suppression of minority rights in their historical and modern context. Raising these subjects in public is regarded as unpatriotic.⁸⁴ Thus we imagine ourselves inaccurately, creating a cohesive ideal through which truth remains untold.⁸⁵

Studies of British values in schools found that many of the lessons create a narrative of an inclusive Britain by addressing issues such as racism through a liberal lens. Martin Luther King Jr is discussed alongside the murder of Stephen Lawrence, with an emphasis on the benefits of multicultural and multiracial societies. But issues such as structural racism which might implicate the current system are ignored.⁸⁶ This increases the possibility that minorities might feel alienated, with their negative experiences being subsumed into a more palatable narrative where racists are simply the “bad apples”, and the British state a fundamentally good actor with the interests of all citizens in mind.⁸⁷ Crawford argues that this positions teachers as defenders of a ‘white hegemonic order’.⁸⁸ Younis further argues that by positioning British values as fundamental to counterterrorism, it creates a strategy that encourages us to see dissent from mainstream Britishness as potentially extreme.⁸⁹ Indeed, ‘Islam is constructed as threatening to the prevailing values in liberal democratic societies’,⁹⁰ and thus this too has to be subsumed into British identity for it to be tamed. A number of the “hard conversations” that are encouraged in British values lessons include discussions on the role of violence in Islam, the nature of Jihad and whether the religion has been “warped” or “distorted” by extremists.⁹¹ As such it is noted by some scholars that many teachers see British values as being specifically targeted towards minorities – particularly Muslims – as a way of dragging them into the national

⁸³ Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*.

⁸⁴ Julia Rone, “‘Enemies of the People’? Diverging Discourses on Sovereignty in Media Coverage of Brexit”, *British Politics* Online First (2021).

⁸⁵ Kevin Tavin, ‘Six Acts of Miscognition: Implications for Art Education’, *Studies in Art Education* 53, no. 1 (2010): 55–68.

⁸⁶ Christine Winter et al., ‘A Moral Education? British Values, Colour-Blindness, and Preventing Terrorism’, *Critical Social Policy*, 10 March 2021, 026101832199892, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018321998926>.

⁸⁷ Anna Lockley-Scott, ‘Towards a Critique of Fundamental British Values: The Case of the Classroom’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40, no. 3 (2019): 354–67.

⁸⁸ Claire Crawford, ‘Promoting “Fundamental British Values” in Schools: A Critical Race Perspective’, *Curriculum Perspectives* 37, no. 2 (October 2017): 197–204, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-017-0029-3>.

⁸⁹ Tarek Younis, ‘The Psychologisation of Counter-Extremism: Unpacking PREVENT’, *Race & Class* 62, no. 3 (2021): 37–60.

⁹⁰ Nadya Ali and Ben Whitham, ‘Racial Capitalism, Islamophobia, and Austerity’, *International Political Sociology* 15, no. 2 (21 April 2021): 190–211, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olaa023>.

⁹¹ Claire Crawford, ‘Promoting “Fundamental British Values” in Schools: A Critical Race Perspective’, *Curriculum Perspectives* 37, no. 2 (2017): 197–204; Melanie C. Brooks et al., ‘Teaching Jihad: Developing Religious Literacy through Graphic Novels’, *Religions* 11, no. 11 (2020): 622.

idea and ensuring that the correct, moderate Islam is followed.⁹² These examples give an overview of the nature of miscognition in Prevent – students are encouraged to rethink what it is to be “British” and adopt an idea of Britishness that is generally supportive of the state, liberal, but without too much criticism of state violence or too much expounding of the contradictions of British life. This is exacerbated by new guidance that sees anti-Capitalist teaching as extreme,⁹³ and textbooks that illustrate state violence as being legitimate and non-state violence as illegitimate.⁹⁴ Students are also encouraged to rethink their own identities within the bounds of these ideas of Britishness. Real conditions of existence, such as structural racism, the nuances of history and theology, and the contradictions of capital and democracy, are discarded for miscognicised identity.

Through Prevent training, others are also miscognized. The political decisions of others to consume, promote and engage with extremist material and groups are not seen as a decision made with a clear mind, concerning one’s own interests and political proclivities. If these decisions fall outside of the acceptable bounds of British values, then they are deemed extremist and become pathologized. In this framework, to be an extremist is to be unable to make agentic choices. Further, those who are not extremists but who might be vulnerable become suspicious. Although Prevent has broadened somewhat, to include the extreme far-right,⁹⁵ suspicion largely remains with Muslim communities.⁹⁶ Thus through Prevent training, we are encouraged to think of others in over-simplified, psychologised, pathologized and largely incorrect ways. There is no space in Prevent training for clear-headed, political, and legitimate terrorism. Those fighting for national liberation for instance, or terrorists who fight for their power and imposition of their vision, are excluded.

This training also masks the contradictions present within British society, in much the same way that British values do. British society still suffers from systemic racism, nationalism and far-right politics which are becoming increasingly prevalent.⁹⁷ The government itself has also been accused of tapping into nationalistic sentiment and whipping up fear of migrants and religious minorities.⁹⁸ However, there is little space in Prevent training for this kind of mainstream racism. As noted, the training does not cover ideologies in-depth and instead

⁹² Emily Danvers, ‘Prevent/Ing Critical Thinking? The Pedagogical Impacts of Prevent in UK Higher Education’, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17 January 2021, 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1872533>; Suraj Lakhani and Natalie James, “‘Prevent Duty’: Empirical Reflections on the Challenges of Addressing Far-Right Extremism within Secondary Schools and Colleges in the UK”, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 14, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 67–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2021.1876550>.

⁹³ Jennifer Luff, ‘Anticapitalism Wasn’t Banned in English Classrooms during the Cold War – Why Is It Now?’, News & Politics, The Conversation, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/anticapitalism-wasnt-banned-in-english-classrooms-during-the-cold-war-why-is-it-now-147121>.

⁹⁴ Kieran Ford, ‘This Violence Good, That Violence Bad: Normative and State-Centric Discourses in British School Textbooks’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12, no. 4 (2019): 693–714.

⁹⁵ HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (CM 9608).

⁹⁶ Arun Kundnani, *Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror* (London: Verso, 2014).

⁹⁷ Paul Stocker, *English Uprising: Brexit and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right* (London: Melville House UK, 2017); Jacob Davey, Erin Saltman, and Jonathan Birdwell, ‘The Mainstreaming of Far-Right Extremism Online and How to Counter It: A Case Study on UK, US and French Elections.’, in *Trumping the Mainstream: The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right*, ed. Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon (London: Routledge, 2019), 23–53; James Downes, ‘How the Far Right Took over the Mainstream’, News & Politics, OpenDemocracy, 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/countering-radical-right/how-far-right-took-over-mainstream/>.

⁹⁸ Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (London: Verso Books, 2020).

encourages a pathologisation of extremism and a reliance on “gut feelings” about who might be a problem.⁹⁹ As British society remains one within which Islam is seen as a threat, racism remains prevalent, and whiteness and Christianity remain the norm. Everyday bigotry including Islamophobia, transphobia, sexism, and racism are less likely to receive a referral as this is not deemed pathological. Thus while the training is *neutral* in that it does not tell anyone to be fearful of Muslims, the training exists in a wider environment in which Muslims are overwhelmingly associated with terrorism and extremism.¹⁰⁰ Islamic extremism is still considered to be the greatest terrorist threat to Britain,¹⁰¹ and Prevent does not tell people to be suspicious of Muslims, but just to remember that extremism comes in all flavours, Muslims included. Through this, the identity and place of some in society becomes distorted, while that of others survives, and we begin to not only miscognise the *extremist* but also those who British society considers to be *extreme*, regardless of the accuracy of that label.

Inscribing ideology in the material process: The Prevent Duty and Channel interventions

According to Althusser, much of what Prevent does is *material* in that it is not just the relaying of ideas, but the embedding of these ideas in institutional structures. These institutions then create the conditions for the enactment of ideology, and through enactment, ideology is reproduced. This process can also be related to the idea of practices, as outlined in Practice Theory. Adler and Pouliot argue that practices are not just actions, but rather ‘socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world.’¹⁰² Thus, the work that is described above is a practice that gives materiality to Prevent. Since 2015 the Prevent duty has made engagement with Prevent mandatory in the public sector, including health, education and social work. Through the Prevent duty, the ideology embedded within Prevent has been absorbed into institutional structures and has become a part of essential services.

The Prevent duty, which was introduced in 2015, requires public institutions to pay ‘due regard’ to Prevent. In practice, this means that some measure of training should be used to make public sector workers aware of Prevent, and means that these workers should report persons to Channel if they are suspicious that they might be vulnerable to radicalization.¹⁰³ They are required to report individuals who display “suspicious” behaviour either directly to safeguarding or Prevent officers, or through the ACT website.¹⁰⁴ Many institutions will also have a Prevent lead and an internal reporting process. Staff are encouraged to follow their intuition when an individual arouses suspicion. There is little criticality with referrals and the securitisation approach to Prevent.¹⁰⁵ This process has largely been accepted,¹⁰⁶ and framing it

⁹⁹ Tarek Younis, ‘The Psychologisation of Counter-Extremism: Unpacking PREVENT’, *Race & Class* 62, no. 3 (January 2021): 37–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396820951055>.

¹⁰⁰ Dominique Wirz et al., ‘The Effects of Right-Wing Populist Communication on Emotions and Cognitions toward Immigrants’, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23, no. 4 (2018): 496–516.

¹⁰¹ HM Government, *CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CM 9608)*.

¹⁰² Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, ‘International Practices’, *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 4.

¹⁰³ Home Office, ‘Statutory Guidance - Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: For England and Wales’.

¹⁰⁴ ACT Action Counter Terrorism, ‘Share a Concer’, 2020, <https://actearly.uk/contact/>.

¹⁰⁵ Younis, ‘The Psychologisation of Counter-Extremism’.

¹⁰⁶ Joel Busher et al., ‘What the Prevent Duty Means for Schools and Colleges in England: An Analysis of Educationalists’ Experiences’, Report, Centre for Trust, Peace & Social Relations, 2017, <https://a10-vip-wwwprod.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/socialrenewal/files/The%20Prevent%20duty%20in%20Schools%20and%20Colleges%20Report.pdf>.

as safeguarding makes ‘the policy an inevitably more straightforward way to comply with the requirements.’¹⁰⁷ This process is encouraged by the police and security sector.¹⁰⁸ However, there are concerns that public sector workers are ill-equipped to understand issues surrounding extremism, and fail to take into account the experiences of Muslims and other minority groups.¹⁰⁹ This is likely due to the poor level of training given to public sector workers on issues relating to extremism and terrorism, enforcing a perspective that ‘offers a simplistic one-dimensional and, at best, an unhelpful contribution to resolving a complex and multidimensional problem.’¹¹⁰ However because Prevent has successfully been framed as safeguarding, an inability to understand extremism or to properly assess risk is overlooked by public sector workers.¹¹¹ Thus teachers, healthcare professionals, and others subject to the duty, are encouraged to refer any suspicion they might have, which will be assessed by a professional¹¹². Those who refer do not need to know what they are doing in this sense. They do not even need to believe that Prevent works – the act of referral becomes the moment in which ideological inscription occurs. If a referral is deemed to be risky, then that person is taken on as a potential extremist or terrorist, thus confirming the rightness of the action. Like Pascal’s prayer, public sector workers refer, and then believe.

When a referral is received, the person referred is then assessed by Prevent, and if deemed suitability vulnerable, their case will be discussed at a Channel panel to decide what to do. As noted previously, Channel attempts to intervene and prevent individuals who are assessed by a panel as being vulnerable to supporting terrorism from actually engaging in the support of or engagement in terrorism. In this sense Prevent ‘does not merely seek to stop someone from committing an act of terrorism, it seeks to stop individuals from becoming engaged in terrorism in the first place.’¹¹³ While making Prevent referrals is encouraged little is known about what happens within Channel.¹¹⁴ What is known is largely taken from cases relayed directly by Prevent professionals, and reviews of failed cases.¹¹⁵ While these cases cannot be generalized,

¹⁰⁷ Alex Elwick and Lee Jerome, ‘Balancing Securitisation and Education in Schools: Teachers’ Agency in Implementing the Prevent Duty’, *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40, no. 3 (2019): 338–53.

¹⁰⁸ David Lundie, ‘Security, Safeguarding and the Curriculum. Recommendations for Effective Multi-Agency Prevent Work in Schools.’ (Liverpool: Liverpool Hope University; British Academy, 2017), <http://cepa.hope.ac.uk/media/microsites/cepa/documents/Security%20Safeguarding%20and%20the%20Curriculum.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Busher et al., ‘What the Prevent Duty Means for Schools and Colleges in England: An Analysis of Educationalists’ Experiences’.

¹¹⁰ Steve Greer and Lindsey Bell, ‘Counter-Terrorist Law in British Universities: A Review of the “Prevent” Debate’, *Public Law*, 2018, 104.

¹¹¹ Home Office, ‘Individuals Referred to and Supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales, April 2018 to March 2019’ (London: Home Office, 2019), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853646/in-dividuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2018-mar2019-hosb3219.pdf; ICM Unlimited, ‘Prevent: Public Knowledge and Interactions A Research Report from ICM Summarising Key Findings’ (London, 2019), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930110/Annex_B_-_Prevent_Survey_findings_report__1_.pdf.

¹¹² Martin, ‘Identifying Potential Terrorists’; Tarek Younis and Sushrut Jadhav, ‘Islamophobia in the National Health Service: An Ethnography of Institutional Racism in PREVENT’s Counter-radicalisation Policy’, *Sociology of Health & Illness* 42, no. 3 (March 2020): 610–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13047>.

¹¹³ Martin Thomas, ‘The Radical Ambitions of Counter-radicalization’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 2 (2021): 270–85.

¹¹⁴ Pettinger, ‘British Terrorism Preemption: Subjectivity and Disjuncture in Channel “De-radicalization” Interventions’; Thornton and Bouhana, ‘Preventing Radicalization in the UK: Expanding the Knowledge-Base on the Channel Programme’.

¹¹⁵ Douglas Weeks, ‘Doing Derad: An Analysis of the U.K. System’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 7 (2018): 523–40.

they nonetheless illustrate how Prevent functions at this level. William Baldét, a former Prevent Officer for Leicestershire highlighted the case of an eleven-year-old boy who was referred to Channel for revering Osama bin Laden and claiming that killing non-Muslims was acceptable. The Prevent investigation uncovered that his father had left, and that he was the main carer for his mentally ill mother. He was also being bullied at school. It was concluded that ‘significant changes in his behaviour and provocative statements were a symptom of this and a cry for help’¹¹⁶ and his extreme statements were a manifestation of his social issues. The panel decided on an intervention process which finding family and mental health support for the boy’s mother to relieve him of the pressures of care, and finding the boy a new school where he would receive pastoral care.

While the localisation of Prevent means that the intervention described by Baldét might not be fully generalisable,¹¹⁷ the intervention described above looks to the individual as the source of the problem. This is reflected in guidance for assessing cases. The document *Channel Duty Guidance* provided by the government to Channel panel members outlines how panel members should assess referrals. Panels assess whether an individual needs Channel support by assessing them against a “Vulnerability Assessment Framework” which includes 22 indicators broken down into three dimensions:

- Engagement with a group, cause or ideology;
- intent to cause harm;
- and Capability to cause harm.¹¹⁸

These engagement factors are described as ‘psychological hooks’ that ‘include needs, susceptibilities, motivations and contextual influences [that] together map the individual pathway into terrorism.’¹¹⁹ The intent is referred to as a mindset that is associated with a readiness to use violence and capability is referred to in the context of skills, networks and ability to carry out terrorist activity. The document further outlines that it is not simply an association with extremist groups that trigger a referral, but that the individual must show a set of “vulnerabilities” that indicate a risk of being involved in terrorist activity. The “psychological hooks” described in the risk assessment framework refer mainly to needs, desires and social contexts which are highly individualised.¹²⁰

These assessments and interventions create a material basis for ideology. While only eleven, the child in Baldét’s narrative is conceptualized as a failed liberal-capitalist subject - his extreme outbursts are traced back to his family being unable to care for themselves within the competitive neoliberal system. The problem of his extremism is not analysed in the context of an NHS unable to cope with the strain of cuts, a state which no longer provides adequate support to struggling families, and the mental strain of living in an increasingly competitive society.¹²¹ Instead, the problem is located in the individual, who is then *fixed* through

¹¹⁶ Will Baldet, ‘Critics Have It Pegged As The Minority Report, But Prevent Really Isn’t That Exciting.’, News, Huffington Post, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/will-baldet/prevent_b_15281784.html.

¹¹⁷ Joshua Skoczylis, *Local Prevention of Terrorism: Strategy and Practice in the Fight against Terror* (London: Palgrave, 2015).

¹¹⁸ HM Government, *Channel: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism* (London: Stationary Office, 2012).

¹¹⁹ HM Government, ‘Counter-Extremism Strategy’, Annex C.

¹²⁰ HM Government, *Counter-Extremism Strategy (CM 9148)*.

¹²¹ Ruth Cain, ‘How Neoliberalism Is Damaging Your Mental Health’, The Conversation, 2018, <http://theconversation.com/how-neoliberalism-is-damaging-your-mental-health-90565>; James Meek, ‘NHS

interventions. Individuals are analysed, and then provided with assistance in getting their life in line with the dominant ideology – those struggling with healthcare, housing, jobs, or relationships are given appropriate assistance. Thus, the intervention enacts the idea that it is the individual that is the problem. Those struggling with housing are not helped by the provision of extra social housing for all, or rent caps, or any other social and political initiatives that would tackle the underlying causes of these issues. Similarly, the Channel guidance creates a framework of looking at individuals outside of the surrounding social and political environment.¹²²

As this framework is used to assess the vulnerability of referrals, it creates a situation where the action is framed around individuals, and thus a material process is enacted whereby the individual is inscribed within ideology as being unable to function. This process is backed by the Prevent duty, creating an impetus for ideological enactment. Public sector workers subject to the Prevent duty are legally obliged to pay due regard to Prevent, meaning that if they wish to keep their jobs, they are forced to think within this framework. Even if they do not believe in Prevent, they must enact it. While resistance can come in the form of non-compliance, surrounding economic and social conditions, and the overall lack of union power, have thus far rendered such activities marginal. As such, the way Prevent is built provides a material basis for the enactment and reproduction of liberal ideology.

Interpellation: Public communications and Prevent referrals

Referrals to Channel are made when someone thinks that someone else is vulnerable to getting involved in terrorism. When making these referrals, details of a person will be passed to a local safeguarding officer, or directly to the Prevent team. The individual will then be assessed according to the Vulnerability Assessment Framework criteria, and if necessary escalated to the next level. If the concern is great enough, the individual will be assessed at a Channel panel made up of local safeguarding, police, and statutory professionals, including mental health and social work professionals.¹²³ If the individual's vulnerability is great enough to warrant an intervention, a bespoke package will be put together to mitigate those vulnerabilities, and that individual will be invited to engage with Channel on a voluntary basis. Should they turn down this offer, their case will likely be referred to other safeguarding services or the police.¹²⁴ Referral details, even when no action was warranted, are kept on the system for lengthy periods. Despite these records being confidential, they have been shared with universities and used in family court proceedings.¹²⁵

Althusser's model for interpellation is simple. For a person to be interpellated, they need to recognise themselves in the call being made. At that moment, they are integrated into the

SOS', *London Review of Books*, 5 April 2018; Shulamit Ramon, 'Neoliberalism and Its Implications for Mental Health in the UK', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 31, no. 2 (March 2008): 116–25, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2008.02.006>.

¹²² HM Government, 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism' (London: HMSO, 2015); Weeks, 'Doing Derad: An Analysis of the U.K. System'.

¹²³ HM Government, *Channel: Protecting Vulnerable People from Being Drawn into Terrorism*.

¹²⁴ Walker and Blackburn, 'Interdiction and Indoctrination: The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015'.

¹²⁵ Fatima Ahdash, 'Childhood Radicalisation and Parental Extremism: How Should Family Law Respond? Insights from A Local Authority v X, Y and Z', in *The Asian Yearbook of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law*, ed. Javaid Rehman, Ayesha Shahid, and Steve Foster, vol. 4 (The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 160–82; Jamie Grierson, 'Manchester Colleges Agreed to Share Data of Students Referred to Counter-Terror Scheme', *Newspaper, The Guardian*, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/19/manchester-colleges-agreed-to-share-data-of-students-referred-to-counter-terror-scheme>.

ideological system as a subject. Many studies have looked at the stigma and labelling effect of a police visit. The fact that you are suspect is internalised, your potential criminalization within the system is noted, and others begin to see you in that way too, reinforcing this notion.¹²⁶ This has also been noted in studies on Prevent.¹²⁷ In the case of Prevent, the interpellation is reinforced by the fact that a referee is not simply being called out to, but being actively addressed and assigned a label. Being referred to Prevent draws you into an ideological web where you are not just a potential (or actual) extremist, but also a vulnerable person whose agency is under question. The sticking power of this label is increased by the fact that upon referral, the name of the referee is entered into a database which may or may not be shared with others in the future.¹²⁸ Refusal of the label, or the intervention, might land a referee in a worse situation, in that they are referred to other safeguarding services, or the police, which could enact more punitive measures against them. This is the coercive side of Prevent, where the state can marshal resources to push someone towards the “right” decision.

However, there is also an offer implicit in Prevent. One does not have to comply with Prevent. Nominally there are no criminal consequences for refusing, although this might result in further assessments of risk, possibly by the police¹²⁹. Coercion is then not absolute, and thus Prevent must offer something as an incentive. One offer that Prevent can make is material – accepting the referral might confer benefits. Prevent interventions can include help with finding a job or a house, help with education, or accessing mental health services. These are scarce resources in a neoliberal and austerity society, and thus can be difficult to turn down if one is in need. However, to receive benefits the subject has to not only recognise that they are the subject of the call, but also to positively answer it. They have to admit they “have a problem”, and thus this locates both themselves and their problem outside of the normal bounds of society, and within the bounds of extremist ideology. The program they buy into also creates a get-out for liberalism. While liberalism might have made the extremist in the first place, by entering Prevent the subject is tacitly accepting the diagnosis of the system, absolving liberalism, and locating the problem within the self. The further outcome of this, after a successful intervention, would be that the subject then identifies with the system itself. In this sense, the subject is invited to both accept that they are an extremist subject that has no place in liberal society, as well as being handed an olive branch of reformation. They are offered both a judgement and penance, and having completed their intervention can then enter into wider society as an acceptable subject. In this sense, the intervention both recognises and offers recognition. This does not mean that the subject then has to be liberal; rather, they just have to be functional. The subject can be cynical, so long as they accept their place so that they now fit into society at large and function effectively.

These interpellations function on a wider level in Prevent communications, albeit with a different contextual and coercive edge. National level communications in Prevent tend to be related to raising awareness of the program, the dangers of radicalization and extremism, and

¹²⁶ Nicholas Appleby, ‘Labelling the Innocent: How Government Counter-Terrorism Advice Creates Labels That Contribute to the Problem’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 3 (2010): 421–36.

¹²⁷ Marie Breen-Smyth, ‘Theorising the “Suspect Community”: Counterterrorism, Security Practices and the Public Imagination’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, no. 2 (2014): 223–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2013.867714>.

¹²⁸ Home Office, ‘Prevent and Channel Factsheet’, Home Office in the Media, 2019, <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/12/19/prevent-and-channel-factsheet/>.

¹²⁹ HM Government, *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting People Vulnerable to Being Drawn into Terrorism* (London: Stationary Office, 2020).

the signs to look out for.¹³⁰ Sometimes these communications target a specific demographic, such as mothers, or Muslim youth.¹³¹ Other times they are more general and raise awareness without specific demographic markers or contexts. But in each case, the communications are directed to a subject; an unaware subject by whose ignorance extremism can thrive and radicalization can occur. The “Hey! You!” of these messages then creates an anxious or amateur subject. Radicalization is formulated as the domain of experts, and something which one needs to be aware of. The latter is reinforced by the implicit threat that if a person does not pay attention and report concerns, then they might find that someone they care about becomes radicalized and is imprisoned or even killed through involvement in extremism or terrorism. Thus that person should not question, but rather trust the authorities to safeguard that person.¹³² The authorities here are positioned as experts, and as persons who can help. These two factors together interpellate the subject into a system where authority is good, and the questioning of authority can result in danger to loved ones. Thus this also places ideology outside of political contestation – it simply needs to be referred to when it emerges, and it will be taken care of.¹³³

These communications also call out to the “good” in society. Many of the communications do not only warn of the dangers of radicalization. Prevent communications show that alongside encouraging referrals, an idea of the “good” citizen is also relayed. Muslims in the UK are interpellated as “moderate” Muslims following a form of “British” Islam, an Islam which refuses all violence, emphasizes tolerance of all faiths, respects the rule of law, and is vocal in denouncing “extremism”. The Radical Middle Way roadshows, which sought to promote moderate Islamic theology, and the #MakingAStand campaign seeking out British Muslim women to publicly denounce ISIS, are illustrative of this.¹³⁴ These campaigns called out to Muslims in Britain with an acceptable subjectivity, a way of demonstrating that they truly are “one of us”. Likewise, the Prevent Tragedies campaign, and many similar campaigns targeting mothers, called out with a “good mother” subjectivity. These campaigns make strong implications about what a good mother is, and how if one is a good mother, then radicalization will not happen. The good mother in these communications is a woman who knows best what her children are up to; holds her children close and cares deeply for them; is listened to in the family, and able to use superior communication skills to persuade against bad decisions.¹³⁵ This is a fairly stereotypical archetype and one against which women across the UK are tested. In each case, Prevent provides a subjectivity to identify with. Identifying with this provides a person with a place in society, allows them to “fit in” and gives them a role to play. Thus interpellation is not just coercive – it has an offer within it.

¹³⁰ Sam Andrews, ‘Women and Prevent: Perceptions, Policy and Encounter’ (PhD Thesis, Lincoln, University of Lincoln, 2021).

¹³¹ Lets Talk about it, ‘Videos’, Working Together to Prevent Extremism, 2020, <https://www.ltai.info/videos/>.

¹³² Sam Andrews, ‘Prevent Tragedies: A Case Study in Female-Targeted Strategic Communications in the United Kingdom’s Prevent Counter-Terrorism Policy’, *Journal for Deradicalization* 24 (2020).

¹³³ Skoczylis and Andrews, ‘Can Prevent Be Saved? No, But ...’

¹³⁴ Narzanin Massoumi, ‘The Role of Civil Society in Political Repression: The UK Prevent Counter-Terrorism Programme’, *Sociology*, 2 April 2021, 003803852199697, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038521996977>; Stephen Jones, ‘New Labour and the Re-Making of British Islam: The Case of the Radical Middle Way and the “Reclamation” of the Classical Islamic Tradition’, *Religions* 4, no. 4 (4 November 2013): 550–66, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel4040550>.

¹³⁵ Andrews, ‘Prevent Tragedies: A Case Study in Female-Targeted Strategic Communications in the United Kingdom’s Prevent Counter-Terrorism Policy’.

The voluntary nature of the policy reinforces this interpellative offering.¹³⁶ It is not required to identify with repressive apparatus – you simply do what they say because otherwise, you might get hurt. The ideological apparatus instead thrives on voluntary compliance. Each moment of voluntary engagement reduces barriers to further engagement and increases the likelihood that the individual will begin to see themselves in the policy. Eventually, they will fully identify with it, seeing the state as the correct authority for managing everyday life. Ideology then no longer is *ideology* but *self*, and actions become natural. The reformed subject, and the British Muslim, can take respective pride in their rejection of extremism and their fitting in with British society. The good mother knows that while she might have sacrificed in taking care of children, she is nonetheless both a good mother in the social sense, but also a good mother protecting her children from extremism. Once these subjectivities become internalised, they become socially and individually invested in, and it then becomes difficult to think outside of this ideological framework. This is a particularly important function of Channel. By keeping the programme voluntary, accepting a Channel intervention creates a moment where the subject tacitly accepts authority and the label of vulnerable or extremist. This creates a self-identification with the label, which becomes something that is no longer forced on the subject but freely accepted. At the same time, it also creates distance from the label, being something, which is not any longer a product of choice but rather a symptom of vulnerability. It becomes externalized and thus something that can be transferred and expelled.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Prevent is an illustrative example of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus theory. As a policy that looks to stop persons from turning to terrorism, Prevent's various components map well to the different aspects of Althusser's theory. In particular, examples show how ideology can come to have a material base through the Prevent duty and by making referrals to Prevent and the Channel programme. This embeds ideology within public services. We also show how miscognition can occur through mandatory training and delivery of Prevent objectives in schools, which creates an idea of extremist and non-extremist persons, and British subjects, which are historically and logically invalid. Finally, we argue that Channel and public Prevent communications interpellate subjects through both material incentives and an "offer" to be part of British society, either as a reformed subject or as a "good" citizen, a "good" Muslim, a "good" mother, and so on. This article has also attempted to utilize Prevent as a case study to clarify and expand on Althusser's theory. Here we have argued that interpellation can have coercive aspects, but this is not the primary cause of the turn – rather, as interpellation is nominally voluntary, there must be an offer implicit in the call. This offer can be to give space for a subject to exist in the social order, or to protect and provide for that person. How Prevent provides positive subjectivities is exemplary of this.

We also demonstrate that research needs to move beyond analysing whether or not Prevent "works" or not. Prevent may or may not work as a counterterrorism policy – to debate this is to miss the point. Prevent works as an ideological strategy that produces subjects and shapes the contours of our political life. It carves out space for us to exist in, interpellating us as subjects, as well as forging a zone within which politics is no longer supposed to take place. To fall within this space is to be an extremist which opens oneself up to more repressive forms of policing. This latter space also needs to be investigated further, to see how resistance

¹³⁶ Lisa Folkmarson Käll, 'A Path Between Voluntarism and Determinism: Tracing Elements of Phenomenology in Judith Butler's Account of Performativity', *Lambda Nordica* 2–3 (2015): 23–48; Brito Vieira, 'Representing Silence in Politics'.

functions within an ISA framework. These “bad subjects” and misinterpellations could not be explored here but would be worthwhile exploring in future work, uncovering both how Prevent seeks to deal with these cases, and how resistance to the policy functions within the ISA framework.

This latter point also develops the study of Prevent by placing criticism of the policy as racist, Islamophobic, repressive or “thought policing” within a wider ideological framework. These individual critiques might be correct *de facto* in that Prevent focuses on minorities and Muslims. However *de jure* it is not correct, as Prevent itself works hard to be inclusive and emphasize that minorities and Muslims are not the problem. It is the ideology that Prevent supports that is the problem, and thus studies that look at, for example, Islamophobia in Prevent need to also uncover how the dominant ideology in Britain is Islamophobic, and how Prevent relates to that. This will allow for a critique that moves beyond reformation and towards a re-politicization of counterterrorism, and feed into a wider discussion of the political problems of society and how to overcome them.

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